

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the continuous preparation of a composition ~~compositions~~ comprising silica, said process comprising, forming a melt by ~~melting~~ in a furnace comprising at least two tanks in series, said tanks each comprising at least one burner submerged in the melt, and wherein silica and fluxing agent for the silica are ~~being~~ introduced into the first tank.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~the preceding claim, wherein~~ characterized in that at least 90% of the silica and at least 90% of the fluxing agent for the silica are introduced into the first tank.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 2 ~~the preceding claim, wherein~~ characterized in that the furnace is fed with a thinner, at least 90% of which is introduced into the second tank of the furnace.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~one of the preceding claims, wherein~~ characterized in that the first tank is heated to a higher temperature than the other tank or tanks of the furnace.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 4 ~~the preceding claim, wherein~~ characterized in that the temperature difference between the first tank and the other tank or tanks is at least 80°C.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 5 ~~the preceding claim, wherein characterized in that~~ the first tank is heated to a temperature ranging from 1230 to 1350° 1350°C, and ~~in that~~ the other tank or tanks are heated to a temperature of at most 1150°C.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~one of the preceding claims, wherein characterized in that the~~ a final composition comprises 10 to 70% SiO₂, by weight, 0.3 to 30% Na₂O, by weight, 5 to 30% B₂O₃, by weight, and 0.3 to 35%, by weight, of at least one oxide of a metal other than Si, Na and B.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 7 ~~the preceding claim, wherein characterized in that~~ the final composition is a frit, comprising 40 to 70% SiO₂, by weight, 20 to 30% Na₂O, by weight, 5 to 15% B₂O₃, by weight, and 3 to 20%, by weight, of at least one oxide of a metal other than Si, Na and B.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 7 ~~either of the preceding claims, wherein characterized in that~~ the metal is selected ~~chosen~~ from chromium, cobalt, copper, nickel, selenium, zirconium, titanium, manganese, praseodymium, iron or ~~and~~ zinc.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~one of the preceding claims, wherein characterized in that~~ at least one oxide of a metal is introduced into the second tank of the furnace.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 10 ~~the preceding claim, wherein characterized in that~~ the furnace comprises at least three tanks in series, the second being heated to a temperature ranging from 1000° to 1150°C, and the third to a temperature ranging from 900° to 1000°C.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 11 ~~the preceding claim, wherein characterized in that~~ the oxide has several oxidation states, and ~~in that~~ the submerged burner(s) of the third tank has/have a sufficiently oxidizing flame for the oxidation state of the oxide to be raised on going, from the second to the third tank.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~one of the preceding claims, wherein characterized in that~~ the composition is a color frit or a tile frit or an enamel.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): A tile frit, obtained by the process of claim 1 ~~one of the preceding claims.~~

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A furnace for the continuous melting of a composition comprising silica, said furnace comprising at least two tanks in series, said tanks each comprising at least one burner submerged in a ~~the~~ melt.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): The furnace as claimed in claim 15 ~~the preceding claim, wherein said furnace characterized in that it~~ comprises at least three tanks in series.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The furnace as claimed in claim 15 ~~one of the preceding furnace claims~~, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ two of the tanks each comprise separate charging means.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A plant for the preparation of glass compositions, comprising ~~the~~ a furnace of claim 15 ~~one of the preceding furnace claims~~, followed by a feeder or a fining zone.